LABOUR MONTHLY

A Magazine of Labour Unity

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Editor: R. Palme Dutt

Blackpool Balance-Sheet ★ R.P.D.

Views on Housing Policy:

I. Nationalise Now! ★ Joan Maynard, J.P., C.C.

II. Differential Rents ★ Leo McGree

Thirty-ninth Anniversary ★ D. N. Pritt, Q.C.

Eye-Witness at Peking ★ R. Page Arnot

A New Trend in Films ★ John Alexander

Letters from Jenny Marx

Labour Discussion Forum

November, 1956

One shilling and sixpence

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THINGS TO COME

IT IS GOOD to hear from Labour Party delegates that *Labour Monthly* was right in the picture and well received as usual at Conference. Good that contributors to our discussion include delegates bringing fresh breezes blowing from Blackpool and Brighton Trades Union Congress. I notice, too, amongst contributors to our *Labour Discussion Forum* a foundation reader—if that is how to describe a trade unionist who has followed the magazine since its first number in July, 1921. No doubt he recalls many a symposium, controversy and policy discussion appearing in our pages these four decades. But two features of the forum which opens on page 520 are new. The contributors are the readers themselves, regardless of whether they also happen to be widely known representative figures; they write on what they think important to themselves and others in the Labour movement. When we have organised a symposium in the past, we have invited leading people to focus attention almost always on some single urgent key question. For example: in *The Future of British Politics* (1944), a Liberal leader and four Labour M.P.s took part; *Post-war Prospects* and *My View of Crimea* (1945) included well over a dozen M.P.s of all parties; there was also *What I think of Europe Today* (1947) with eight M.P.s and *Can Armaments Be Reduced*? (1949) with ten.

But I want to recall now earlier discussions, taking place in very different times and conditions; yet the problems have a familiar ring which may surprise and stimulate some readers under thirty. Take that first discussion, mentioned last month, begun by G. D. H. Cole, *'Black Friday' and After*. Here's a comment—by a 25-year-old—on that significant failure to back the miners in the 1921 Lockout—the first post-war challenge by employers: *'The essential feature of Black Friday was this: the refusal of solidarity by the Labour movement because of fears of the results of that solidarity. . . . The leaders who declared that it was necessary to retreat have since told us that they did so, not because they feared a defeat, but because they feared a victory. Labour still shrinks from exerting its full strength, as Capital has never shrunk: and that is why Capital wins, and a handful of men are able to impose their will on many millions. The leaders of Labour still suffer from a divided allegiance: they regard themselves as ultimately responsible, not to the movement they are leading, but to something else . . . they believe to be the "community", and they are afraid of hurting it: but in reality it is Capitalism, and that is the secret of their paralysis.'* Shades of the betrayal of the 1926 General Strike to come, of MacDonald's sell-out of the second Labour Government, in 1929!

Passing a high-powered *Controversy on Violence* between Gerald

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Notes of the Month

Blackpool Balance-Sheet

'The pull is strongly leftward. . . . But Labour is still groping for one prerequisite for a party of the Left—a programme.'

('The Times' editorial, 'Leftward Labour', 3.10.56.)

'The sharing of policy-making by Labour's Left can unite the party's strength throughout the country as it will need to be united for success in office.'

('Daily Herald' editorial, 3.10.56.)

BLACKPOOL, following Brighton, has at once reflected and helped to stimulate the rising militant spirit of confidence in Labour's ranks. The immediate reasons for this upward swing are manifest. First, the sense of approaching victory over the Tory Government is in the air. Toryism has begun to lose ground, both through its economic record, and through its senseless handling over Suez, Cyprus and military policy. Bi-partisanship has received a blow. The newspaper polls show a potential Labour majority, provided united strength can be mobilised to reap the harvest. Second, the organised workers are on the march. The

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strike movement on redundancy and automation; the new militant trends in the general unions; the sweep forward of the trade unions at Brighton, with the unanimous rejection of wage-restraint; and the upsurge over Suez, compelling a change of policy of the leadership: all these have demonstrated an aggressive spirit of challenge to Toryism and the employers alike in the economic and in the political field.

Portent of Blackpool

But the most important new fact of Blackpool is that these fresh currents have begun to make themselves felt, despite all obstacles, in the machinery and leadership of the Labour Party. Not yet in basic policy. The basic policy is still unchanged, though some significant progressive decisions were reached at Blackpool. But the spirit of the debates; the elections to the Executive, and especially the victory of the candidate of the left over the candidate of the right in the keenly contested battle for the Treasurership; and the evident recognition by the Executive majority of the necessity to make a certain adaptation of tone to the prevailing left mood: all these indicated the first signs of the beginning of a new balance of forces in the Labour Party. It is still only a beginning. We must not exaggerate the ground won. We cannot afford any complacency. We need soberly to estimate the stage reached and the next steps. But Blackpool has opened the gates. We need now to press forward the advance. Big political battles are in front. Victory in these battles will depend on the success of militant policy and unity of all sections of the labour movement.

From Brighton to Blackpool

Brighton prepared the way for Blackpool. Time was when the weight of the trade unions was regarded by many socialists as the conservative brake on the advance of the political movement. The experience of these recent years has offered a different picture. The rising strength of the left as a powerful and representative force with a consistent alternative policy has been first demonstrated in the Trades Union Congress during these years, and has only more slowly begun to find reflection, alongside the constituency labour parties, to alter the balance in the Labour Party. The Brighton Trades Union Congress led the way in taking a firm stand against the policy of force over Suez, and adopted a series of resolutions more radical in tone and content than Blackpool. 'Brighton was a

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signpost to Blackpool', was the verdict of one delegate quoted approvingly by Mrs. Barbara Castle, who herself led the vote of the constituency parties in the election to the Executive; and she quoted another delegate as saying 'The night we went to Blackpool by way of Brighton Pier'. When the trade unions begin to make the pace for a militant policy, the signals are sounding for very much more far-reaching changes in the Labour Party than have yet been envisaged, if the political movement is not to lag behind and lose touch with its base. Between the organised workers who are on the march, out of their practical experience, and with whatever stumblings and cross-currents on the road, towards the demand for 'old-type socialism'—as voiced by the new General Secretary of the Transport Workers—and the academic 'new thinkers' who are sounding the call for the retreat from the 'obsolete shibboleths' of the socialism of the pioneers, the choice will have to be made.

Practical Conclusions

Important practical conclusions follow from these signs of the beginnings of a certain shift in the role of the trade unions in the Labour Party. Previously a long continued controversy tended to divide supporters of socialism and the left in the political movement. One section of the left, represented by some of the active members in the constituency parties and expressed by some of the writers in *Tribune*, tended to despair of the trade unions and their block vote as the insuperable reactionary obstacle to the advance desired by ardent socialists in the constituency parties, and therefore sought to concentrate their fire on the block vote as the enemy to be destroyed. This was a manifestly impracticable strategy of beating an angry head against a brick wall, since any changes in the constitutional procedure of the sovereign unions, and the extension of democratic consultation of the membership within the unions, could only be carried out by the unions themselves, and not by any outside force, and any proposed changes in the constitutional structure of the Labour Party could only be carried out by the very block vote which was being made the central object of attack.

Building the Progressive Alliance

The other section of the left, represented by the Communist Party and most militant trade unionists, saw the path of advance, not through counterposing the constituency parties against the trade unions, but through the alliance of the progressive forces of the trade unions with the constituency parties to bring about a change

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in the balance in the Labour Party. The experience of Brighton and Blackpool has now proved the correctness of the latter policy. It has dealt a blow to the doubts and defeatism of the impatient section of the left in the constituency parties, and among some of the parliamentarians, who sought to foster hostility to the trade unions as an inevitably reactionary conservative force automatically manipulated by the right wing bureaucracy. The test of practice is now proving the possibility and superior advantages of the alternative path. Even in the mammoth transport union, which the impatient left saw as the main enemy to be destroyed, and therefore sedulously fostered every sign of disruption as if it were a step forward, the advance of the progressive trend is unmistakable. The longer-sighted strategy of the Communist Party is now being proved in action. On the basis of the patient and consistent work of the progressive forces in the trade unions, alongside the advance of militant feeling in the constituency parties, the first signs of a shift in the balance of forces in the Labour Party have made themselves felt. The task is now to strengthen and carry forward this progressive alliance.

Trade Unions and Socialism

To ignore the role of the trade unions as the decisive basis of the Labour Party, however much the more difficult and cumbrous political development of these great mass organisations of the working class may arouse the subjective impatience of ardent socialists in the constituency sections, is to ignore the whole historical evolution of the British labour movement. The trade unions are the foundation of the Labour Party, and the secret of its strength, which ensures its continuing significance, whatever the immediate policies and character of its leadership. But trade unionism alone, as Marxism has always taught, only generates trade union consciousness, however militant. It does not spontaneously generate socialist consciousness. The battle for socialism has therefore to be fought in the trade unions if it is to be won in the Labour Party. Otherwise capitalist politics will inevitably dominate the Labour Party and use the trade union block vote as its bludgeon against the aspirations of individual socialists. But the battle for socialism within the trade unions requires, since its victory cannot come spontaneously, the existence of a political party of socialism, not lecturing the unions from outside, but firmly rooted in industry, in the factories and the trade unions, combining the daily struggle with the wider political aims, and co-operating with all militant elements in the

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unions for economic and political advance. This is the indispensable role of the Communist Party, and its organ the *Daily Worker,* in relation to the trade unions and the Labour Party, and the condition for the victory of socialism in the Labour Party. The first steps along this road have now been taken, but only the first steps.

Socialists, Communists and Trade Unionists

The alliance of socialists, communists and militant trade unionists in the unions has made possible the advance which has taken place during the recent period in the entire trade union field, and which found a very significant measure of expression in the decisions of the Brighton Trades Union Congress. This advance also found its reflection, although a weaker reflection, in the measure of the resolutions and policies adopted, or in the strength of the opposition votes where right wing policy still prevailed, at the Blackpool Labour Party Conference. The reason for this difference is inescapable. The alliance was still able to influence the outcome; but one wing of the alliance was artificially excluded from direct participation. The participation of communist trade union delegates and spokesmen as an integral and respected element of the progressive forces of the left, directly influencing the outcome (as in the carrying of the forty hours resolution against the General Council, despite the latter's putting up of Cousins for its defence) was recognised by all at Brighton and contributed to the positive results. This direct participation of freely elected union leading officials, delegates and spokesmen was artificially excluded at Blackpool; and the combined fight of the left was to that extent weakened.

Democracy in the Labour Party

The conclusion is manifest. The next step forward in relation to the structure of the Labour Party, in order to facilitate progressive advance, is not the battle against the block vote. There is still plenty of room to improve and strengthen the democratic machinery of the unions, so as to ensure that the delegates to the Labour Party effectively represent the opinions of the membership and that the maximum opportunity has been afforded the membership beforehand to discuss and pronounce upon the issues to be decided and mandate their delegates. But this is the province of the unions, not of the Labour Party. The next step forward for the Labour Party is to improve its own democratic machinery, so that the same democratic freedom of representation of the organised workers which has

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been attained at the Trades Union Congress (still with room for improvement) can prevail also in the Labour Party. This is the essential next step forward for the progressive advance of the Labour Party.

Unity is Strength

An engineering delegate commented on Blackpool:

> The conference has moved to the left in comparison with the last four years, but not so far to the left as the Trades Union Congress, to which I was a delegate from the Amalgamated Engineering Union.

Why the difference? The same unions are represented in both conferences. Why, then, the slower advance and relatively less radical outcome at Blackpool, despite the measure of advance won, in respect of the decisions, the debates and the general voting strength of the left? It could not be because the constituency parties are added to the unions in the Labour Party Conference and account for about one-sixth of the voting strength. On the contrary. These latter are at present more overwhelmingly aligned with the left than at any previous time, as shown in the election of their representatives to the Executive. This fact, therefore, only underlines the disparity in the strength of representation and spokesmanship of the left in the unions in the two conferences. The only organisational difference to account for the political difference lies in the operation of the anti-democratic bans to prevent the same freedom of choice of delegates by the unions at the Labour Party Conference as at the Trades Union Congress. This contrast, therefore, provides an almost laboratory measure of the strength and significance of the role of the Communist Party in the broad labour movement. For this reason the removal of the bans is no narrow question of the interests of a section, but of urgent importance for the strength of the whole left and the advance of the whole labour movement. It is necessary to emphasise this today, because, while increasing numbers on the left are coming to recognise this common interest, some sections on the left still fall victims to the right wing parrot-cries about 'insignificance' of the Communist Party, and believe they can best promote their aims by combining the battle against right wing policies with proclamations of disassociation from the communists, thus dividing the left. Unity is strength, and the co-operation of all progressive sections in the labour movement is desirable for the advance of the whole movement.

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Wider Horizons

Unity of all sections will be more than ever necessary in face of the coming political and industrial battles. Toryism has begun to become discredited, but is by no means yet beaten. On the contrary. Toryism and the employers and landlords are very much on the offensive, as shown in their higher rents legislation, their attitude to wage demands, and their swashbuckling foreign and colonial policy. It is not an accident that Suez has proved to be the issue which has galvanised the whole industrial and political movement to stir forward to new advance and heightened political consciousness, compelling the top leadership to make a hasty reversal of policy. The new political currents in Britain are not isolated from the world situation, but are an integral part of it. The entire historical record of the modern period has shown how every major political advance in Britain has been closely associated with an advance in the world situation. Just as the 1905 Revolution was followed by the sweeping defeat of Toryism in 1906; the 1917 Revolution, whose thirty-ninth anniversary we celebrate this month, was followed by the adoption of socialism by the Labour Party in 1918; the 1945 joint victory with the Soviet Union over fascism was followed by the return of the first Labour majority; so the present sweeping advance of socialism, communism and national liberation in the world, characterised by Bandung, the Twentieth Congress, the new role of China and India, and the upsurge of the Middle East, has been followed by new currents of political advance in the old imperialist centre of Britain. Egypt's courageous stand against the armed threats of Anglo-French imperialism has not only aroused the enthusiasm of all popular anti-imperialist opinion throughout the world, but has raised the whole level of the fight of the labour movement in Britain against Toryism.

Alliance in Action

Herein is demonstrated in living action, more powerfully and vividly than in a hundred theoretical expositions, the meaning of the alliance of the British working class and the national liberation struggle of the colonial and ex-colonial peoples against imperialism as the key to advance, not only in the international situation, but within Britain. Every move forward of one partner in the alliance helps the other against the common enemy; and the aid is mutual. It is still customary for the top leaders of the Labour Party, even after they have been compelled by the movement to reverse their initial unity with Toryism over Suez, to begin their expositions of

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policy with a denunciation of Nasser as a reactionary military dictator. Certainly the Nasser regime in Egypt, which swept out the pro-imperialist Farouk monarchy and corrupt court clique, is a military dictatorship, suppressing the still weak left and beginnings of communism, just as in seventeenth-century England the Cromwell regime, which executed the King and stood up foursquare to the armed threats of royalist Europe, was also a military dictatorship, suppressing the weak beginnings of radical democracy and communism at that time in England.

Mutual Aid

But the Nasser regime, through its participation in the Bandung Conference, has linked forces with the world front against imperialism, has patriotically stood up for Egyptian national independence and just rights, has strengthened friendly relations with the socialist countries, and by its nationalisation of the Western financial octopus of the Canal Company, has placed itself in the front line of the world fight against imperialism, arousing thereby the enthusiastic support, not only of the entire Egyptian people, but of all the peoples of Asia and Africa. In this sense the Nasser regime, whatever the limitations still in internal development (and some significant initial indications of advance have here also begun to appear) is in its world historical role a hundred times more progressive than the 'socialist' Mollet who orders the guns of imperialism to fire on Algerian patriots or bully the united Egyptian nation. So far from reviling Nasser, the British labour movement would have more reason to send him a letter of thanks. For his stand on behalf of the Egyptian people has lifted up the whole British labour movement, dealt a shattering blow to bi-partisanship, and sparked a current which may yet bring down Eden and Toryism. Nor is this only one-way aid. The united support of the powerful British labour movement for Egypt's resistance to the armed threats of Anglo-French imperialism has equally aided and strengthened Egypt's stand in the fight against the common enemy. Herein is revealed the secret of the fight against British imperialism (that is, against British monopoly capitalism seen in its true extent, and not in parochial terms), which is the heart of the fight for socialism in Britain.

The Gulf

The delegates' speeches of the mover and seconder of the resolution on Suez at Blackpool showed a keener understanding of this

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situation than the statements of the leadership. Mr. Gaitskell on August 2 had found Nasser comparable to Hitler:

> It is all very familiar. It is exactly the same that we encountered from Mussolini and Hitler in those years before the war.

But the mover of the resolution at Blackpool bluntly declared:

> To talk of Nasser in terms of Hitler and appeasement is to talk balderdash.

Mr. Herbert Morrison on behalf of the Front Bench on August 2 had declared for support of a Tory war against Egypt irrespective of any reference to the United Nations, even if it were only an Anglo-French war:

> If the Government and France, possibly with the United States, came to the conclusion that the use of force would be justified, it would be the duty of all members and himself to say they would give support. (Ministerial cheers.)

And Mr. Shinwell at Blackpool even indicted the Government for military unpreparedness to make war on Egypt:

> I do not believe that the Government intended to go to war against Egypt—whether it wanted to or not—for the simple reason that it was incapable of doing so. That is our condemnation of the Government.

But the seconder of the resolution bluntly declared that the issue was to oppose the use of force against Egypt, even if the attempt were made to cover it by a prior appeal to the United Nations:

> Even if the United Nations sanction the use of force as well as economic sanctions, the Labour Party must do everything in its power to oppose such actions (applause). Our slogan must be 'peace and not war'.

Here we see the gulf between the aspirations of the rank and file for a policy of socialism, peace and anti-imperialism, in contrast to the imperialist assumptions still governing the dominant official policy and thereby weakening the front against Toryism.

'Everything Except Get Off Their Backs'

This basic contrast was further emphasised in the debates on colonial policy. There was no lack of attention to the colonial question; the revolt of the colonial peoples has banished the old neglect. There was no lack of the most eloquent resolutions and appeals to give 'aid' to the poor backward colonial peoples, even to the extent of allocating one per cent of the national income for this purpose: that is to say, to 'give' to the colonial peoples (at the expense of the British workers) the equivalent of a portion of the plunder taken from them (appropriated by the British monopolists). But when it came to a proposal to end the colonial wars and with-

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draw the armed forces from invading and holding down the countries of other peoples, this demand, voiced by the electricians, was rejected. This policy was justified on the grounds that to withdraw the British armed forces from Malaya would mean handing over the country to 'a minority': *i.e.,* that the proposals of the Malayan Communist Party for a democratic republic and a Government based on universal suffrage and freedom of election would represent in the view of these peculiar democrats the tyranny of a minority, while the forcible maintenance of a Government, which in their opinion could only be maintained by the foreign bayonets of an occupying Power, represented true democracy. Here, in this combination of philanthropic charity (give them back a portion of the plunder taken from them, and call it 'aid') and armed suppression, we see the typical attitude of the Grand Seigneur, when confronted with the revolt of his serfs: give them blankets and coals for Christmas, commiserate their sad estate, deplore their backwardness—in short, as Tolstoy said, do everything for the poor except get off their backs.

Home and Foreign Policy

An imperialist foreign policy is in its outcome incompatible with a progressive home policy. This was the main lesson of the Attlee-Bevin-Cripps Government. The Blackpool resolution on Germany represented a step forward, compared with the previous support of West German remilitarisation, insofar as it proposed that the realisation of a united democratic Germany should be accomplished within a framework of European security and with the progressive withdrawal of all occupation troops. But the rejection of the resolution moved by Mr. Zilliacus on foreign policy (which, whatever opinion might be held on weaknesses in particular sections of a long resolution, represented a serious attempt to present a positive alternative to the cold war programme), was accompanied, in the Executive reply, not only with arguments dating from the cold war, but also with emphatic insistence on the necessity for Britain to maintain its chain of 'fortress bases' or overseas military bases throughout the world. This means the continuance of overseas military commitments. At the Tory Conference Mr. Macmillan explained that it was difficult to cut Government expenditure, since out of a total of £4,200 million expenditure the greater part, or £2,200 million went to arms and debt interest. Hence he concluded that the economy drive must be directed against the home consumer, as expressed in the subsidy cuts, with the consequent increased prices of necessities

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of life, the credit squeeze or the rents offensive. A Labour Government will be faced with the same basic problem. Only a decisive change in the present imperialist foreign policy will make possible a progressive home policy. All the ingenious devices for chasing tax evaders will provide no substitute for the necessity of such decisive changes, alike in foreign policy and overseas military commitments, and in social and economic policy at home.

Unity in Action

Toryism is not yet on the defensive. It is on the offensive. This is shown equally in the new proposed legislation to raise rents and in the attitude of the employers and nationalisation boards to the wage demands of the unions. It is the peculiar character of the present political situation that Toryism and the employers are stepping up their offensive at the same time as they are losing ground in popular support. The consciousness of their prospective end hastens their endeavour to put through the most reactionary measures of their programme before they have to hand over. The conclusion is clear. The most active united fight of all sections of the labour movement is essential, not only to defeat the present immediate economic offensive, but at the same time to raise the whole level of the political campaign so as to speed the fall of the Tory Government.

Contact and Co-operation

Mr. R. H. S. Crossman, in his constructive contribution on the question of socialist-communist relations in last month's issue of our journal, urged the desirability of individual contacts from both sides with the 'aim of really getting to know each other.' This would already, as he says, represent 'an immense step forward'. But it is evident that we cannot confine such contact to the discussion of abstract ideas. We are engaged in the real world—all of us. When the landlord raises rents, he does not enquire into the political affiliation of his tenants. When trade unionists are fighting their battle over wages or redundancy, then in living practice Labour Party, Communist and non-party trade unionists are fighting shoulder to shoulder, and working out their plans and decisions in common on the directing committees, in the delegate conferences, or in the mass meetings. When it is necessary to demonstrate over Suez or against the H-bomb, every support for the common aim is welcome. Not only contact is needed, but co-operation in action. In the initial

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contributions to our Labour Discussion Forum it is evident that thought is being directed to the programme of a future Labour Government and to a number of specific immediate issues. But it is also clear that a much greater sense of urgency is needed on the central task of mobilising the most effective and active united campaign of all sections of the labour movement in order to hasten the defeat of the Tory Government and enter on the road of advance towards the transformation of Britain in the interests of the majority of the people.

R.P.D.

October 15, 1956.

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AUGUST: *Breakers Ahead* (R. Page Arnot); *Crisis in Motors* (Peter Kerrigan); *A New Atmosphere* (Camille Huysmans); *Technical Education and the White Paper* (Charles Harrington); *The New 'Socialism'* (Sancho Panza); *Letters from Mrs. Marx; A Toolmaker's Letter* (A. Zaslavsky). BOOK REVIEWS: *The Judgment of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg* (J. Wexley); *George Meredith* (J. Lindsay); *India Today and Tomorrow* (R. Palme Dutt); *Adventures in Bukhara* (L. Solovyev); reviewed by C. Belfrage, Arnold Kettle, D. N. Pritt, Q.C., I.M.

SEPTEMBER: *War Hysteria and Second Thoughts* (R.P.D.); *The Far-Sighted Militants* (John Baird, M.P.); *Background to the Tory Squeeze* (John Eaton); *The Suez Question* (Quæstor); *East of Suez* (Ajoy Ghosh); *Shaw and the Soviet Union* (R. Page Arnot); *Letters from Mrs. Marx, II.*

OCTOBER: *Labour Into Battle* (R.P.D.); *Labour Discussion Forum Announcement; Thoughts on Socialist-Communist Relations* (R. H. S. Crossman, M.P.); *G. D. H. Cole and Unity* (James Klugmann); *Why This Suez Madness?* (Ivor Montagu); *The Co-operatives at the Crossroads* (Joseph Reeves, M.P.); *T.U.C. Programme* (Frank Haxell); *Whither Germany?* (Gordon Schaffer). BOOK REVIEWS: *U.S.A. Today* (H. and S. Nearing); *Window on Moscow* (M. Miller); reviewed by J. Williamson, M. Pollitt.

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VIEWS ON HOUSING POLICY

I. Nationalise Now!

JOAN MAYNARD, J.P., C.C.

LESS than a week after we had left Blackpool following the Party Conference the Tories announce that they are scrapping the Rents Acts. Whatever else may come of that—and the consequences may be more far reaching than the landlords and their Government think—it means that Labour must solve the housing problem, once and for all.

Before we can have a socialist policy for housing it is essential to *nationalise land; it rightly belongs to the people, any value it has* arises out of its development and use by the people. Once land is nationally owned we can plan our agriculture, our housing, our school building, etc., in the interests of the maximum number of people, and not for private profit. We then need to nationalise the building industry and its ancillary trades; without this how can we hope to have a socialist policy for housing? A privately owned industry exists in order to make the maximum profit for a few, not in order to build for the benefit of the people. Ownership is the only effective and positive way to control. Nationalisation of any industry should only be carried out with the fullest co-operation of the workers in that industry.

It is incredible that the Labour Party should even have produced a Housing Statement without consulting the building trade workers. As their general secretary said at the Labour Party Conference 'my men will build the houses'. This down-to-earth statement put matters in their proper perspective: Labour leaders and Conference may write and pass Housing Policy Statements but it is the building trade workers who make this policy a reality.

In a socialist policy for housing there should be no place for interest charges. It is fantastic that working people who make all capital should subsequently have some of this capital loaned back to them via local authorities for house building and be charged interest for it. This is putting the burden twice on the same shoulders, another gross injustice of the capitalist system, one would think so-called socialists would not want to carry it on. No interest charges

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would also mean no subsidies, for the subsidy is only necessary to help tenants pay interest charges, and of course the subsidy like everything else comes out of the working man's sweat and toil. Capitalist society is a giant conspiracy and fraud on working people.

There are many good things about the Labour Party's Policy Statement on Housing: letting houses for rent is unprofitable, therefore the answer is public ownership. I hope however that the Party will get down to working out plans to nationalise some industries which are paying; I am getting very tired of the working class always having to be saddled with bankrupt private enterprise. This brings me to the question of housing improvement grants for private property owners. I have always been against these grants. In my own Rural District in two and a half years more than £21,000 has been paid out to six big property owners. All of them have therefore improved tied cottages with your money and mine, and of course other houses they own. All of them are well enough off to pay for the improvements themselves. We must have put thousands of pounds into their pockets, for the property still belongs to them. When public money is spent in this way the property should revert to the local authority. These grants are particularly hard to bear at the moment when the subsidy has been cut to Council tenants.

Then again, how can any socialist support differential rents, or a rents rebate scheme, which is just different words for the same thing. For years socialists have been fighting against the means test, yet today we have to look on whilst some Labour Councillors support differential rents, and others get expelled from the Party for not supporting them.

Labour must stop tinkering about with the present system and helping to bolster it up. Socialists want to abolish capitalism and replace it by socialism.

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II. Differential Rents

LEO McGREE*

THE decision of the Blackpool Labour Party Conference to reject a resolution for opposition to differential rents raises a very serious issue for the labour movement. Prior to the last election the Tories put forward the slogan 'Vote Conservative and set the Builders free' and this is the one pledge they have faithfully kept. All controls have been removed from the building industry, while the building material merchants fix their prices without hindrance or restriction. The Government policy of curtailing the building of houses for rent by local authorities, has played into the hands of the speculative builder (more popularly known as the jerry builder), the huge building societies, and the finance corporations. Those who are on the waiting lists of local authorities are being exploited to the full. With the high rate of interest charges being imposed by the city financiers, the building industry has become a moneylenders' paradise.

Every local authority in the country is now faced with the problem of balancing the housing budget, to meet the increased cost of building materials, and the great burden of interest payments. To do this many councils are in favour of a direct increase in the rents of council tenants, and/or an increase in the local rates. All councils are being urged by the Government to get over the difficulty by the introduction of differential rent schemes.

To put this policy across, Government spokesmen and the press prate about the plight of the old age pensioners, who have to pay the same rent as people with large incomes, and they ask 'why should the old age pensioner have to subsidise the more wealthy tenants?' We all know the difficulties facing the old age pensioners, and we all know the simple answer to that problem—increase the old age pensions immediately, and we know the Tories' refusal to accept that solution. But have not the old age pensioners, the poor widows, and the poor in general, been compelled to subsidise the large industrialist under the acts derating industrial property, which were introduced to relieve big business of the responsibility of paying their full local rates? Why should the local councils, many

*Mr. McGree's speech in the debate on the housing resolution, passed at the Brighton Trades Union Congress, aroused wide interest.

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of them Labour controlled, now have to carry out the dirty work of the Tory Government, by increasing the rents of council tenants? Why should they introduce the hated Means Test to determine what increase in rent you can afford to pay?

How are differential rents introduced? First, the local authority declares a minimum rent, and then a maximum rent. This is done by reducing the normal by a few shillings, and calling it the minimum rent; then they double the normal rent and call it the maximum rent. Everyone is then required to pay the full maximum rent. If you feel you cannot afford it, you ask the rent collector for a form of appeal. The Westminster City Council have fixed their minimum rent (for a four-roomed flat) at 37s. 6d. per week, and the maximum for the same flat at 81s. 9d. per week.

So you appeal against the payment of the maximum rent. You fill in all the details of your weekly wage for the past 13 weeks, before deductions of income tax, including all overtime, bonus or gratuities. A poor memory will not assist you as the local authority checks your statement with your employer. Now the council (having checked with your employer) takes the average wage you have received over the 13 weeks; they add to that your wife's earnings, minus the first £2 and from this total they take one eighth of the first £8, plus one fifth of the balance, and that is your rent, but not 'yer lot'; as to that they also add: — 10s. per week for every wage earner over 21 plus 5s. per week for every wage earner under 21. What a large rake-off this means to the local authority can be seen from the following examples: —

Orpington, Kent

They had a deficit of £12,000 a year in their Housing Fund. They introduced differential rents and collected an extra £40,000 per year.

Lewisham

With a deficit of £27,100 they estimated they would raise £44,000 per year under differential rents, until the tenants grew angry, revolted, and secured an amendment.

Leaving the hated Means Test on one side, why should we have to pay rents related to our wages (this is a popular line with some Labour Councillors)? For, irrespective of income, we will all pay the same increase in the price of bread this month (with no tears from the Tories about the old age pensioners). Besides, do we not all pay the same amount for our dustbins to be emptied?

It is not generally realised how small a proportion of rate revenue is devoted to housing.. In 1955-56 the average amount raised in

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rates per head of the population in County Boroughs was £9 2s. 3d. This is how part of it was spent:—

	£	s.	d.
Education	3	10	2
Highways	1	5	2
Police		15	8
Sewerage		11	0
Parks		9	2
Housing		8	7

What do we spend on interest charges? The Tory Government refuses to grant loans from the Public Works Loan Board and forces the local authority to apply to the 'city' for a loan; in other words they must apply to the money lenders. This is how it works:— *Glasgow* was first to carry out the Tory instruction, when they required a loan of £5 millions. They offered 4¾ per cent. interest, plus 1½ per cent. discount. In other words they offered £4 15s. 0d. per year interest on every £98 10s. 0d. lent, but would have to repay £100 at the end of the loan. How did the money lenders respond? They did not raise a dime, and the issue was left in the hands of the underwriters. *Liverpool* came next, and they required £4 millions. They offered 4¾ per cent. interest plus 3 per cent. discount, which means they have to pay £4 15s. 0d. per year on every £97 borrowed, and repay £100. The city sharks took this more attractive bait, and the loan was over-subscribed in ten minutes.

Our reply to the Tories should be to unite the whole of the labour and trade union movement—trades councils, tenants' associations, everybody—in a national campaign for:—

1. The ending of all rent increases and differential rent schemes.
2. The reduction of interest charges to 2 per cent.
3. An increase in subsidies to the level prevailing in 1946.
4. An end to the derating of all industrial properties.

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THIRTY-NINTH ANNIVERSARY

D. N. PRITT, Q.C.

IT is useful to look back thirty-nine years, to remember the 'ten days that shook the world', the birth of the new Soviet state whose final death was reported approximately once a week for its first few years, later only once every few months, and in the end not at all!

And what a world it was that was shaken! An old, still almost complacent, capitalist world of foot-slogging armies and a gold standard, which was thought to be 'as safe as the Bank of England' (and, after all, that is how safe it was!) Its controllers even thought it was safe enough for them to indulge in a world war without any danger of 'those dreadful socialists' doing anything.

Within its own territories, what has the U.S.S.R. won? In spite of all the efforts of the press, the story is well-known to those who are not 'as the deaf-adder, which stoppeth her ears', and I must not relate it at too great length. Materially, one of the poorest and most backward states in the world has become the second most advanced and powerful—and will not long be second. And that material advance, greater in achievement than anything done—as yet—in any two centuries in any other part of the world, was won without any normal accumulated capital to start on, without any help from outside.

Even the tremendous devastation and losses borne by the Soviet Union in resisting and defeating the full brunt of the most massive military attack in world history could not prevent that advance. Even the tragic consequence of the violation of Socialist legality which took place during these years of storm and stress could not prevent it. Indeed the staggering achievements that have been won in spite of these unprecedented difficulties are even more remarkable for the very fact that they have been so won. If advance was in certain respects in consequence delayed, now it should be far swifter than ever.

So much for the effect within the Soviet lands. What of the effects outside? Here, I must first consider separately on the one hand the effects—whether immediate or long-term—on the countries whose rulers are not friendly to the new Socialist world, and on the other the effects on countries which are friendly; and finally I must add a word about effects produced equally on all countries.

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On the first, there are both the immediate reactions and effects, in 1917 and the three or four years that followed, and the effects in relatively recent times, from say 1921 onwards.

The immediate reactions, studied now as one looks back, are very interesting. The ruling classes of U.S.A. and Britain reacted much more intelligently and profoundly (from their own selfish point of view) than may have been generally realised at the time. They saw plainly that the revolution was of the greatest importance, that its example might well lead the working classes of other countries—including economically advanced countries—to similar revolutionary activity, and that (the First World War being, of course, by no mean then over), the 'safest' of capitalist countries was not safe, and could not even calculate how unsafe it was. They accordingly adopted three lines of policy to meet the situation. The first was to try to head off revolutionary sentiment by the conciliatory proposals contained in President Wilson's 'Fourteen Points' (shamelessly abandoned at Versailles when they had, so to speak, 'earned their keep'). The second was to try to conceal from the mass of the workers in the capitalist countries the true essence and scope of what had taken place in Russia by wholesale misrepresentation and suppression of news.

The third line was to start the wars of intervention in the vain hope of achieving the military destruction of the infant Socialist state—with a view, as Winston Churchill put it, 'to kill off the old hen before she hatches too many chicks'. (It is a reminder of how bitter was the hostility to the Socialist state at the time that, even before the end of the war against Germany, French, German and British troops fought side by side against the Red Army in Southern Russia; and that one of the terms of the 1918 armistice was that the German armies then occupying the old Tsarist territories of Latvia, Lithuania and Esthonia should not surrender or withdraw to Germany, but should remain on the spot, intact and armed, in order to keep the Red Army out until the 'Allied' armies had time to come up and take over the business.)

These three lines of policy, between them, caused infinite damage, hardship, loss of life, and delay in socialist development; yet all together, they achieved, as against the successful growth of the Soviet Union, nothing but a little delay.

The longer-term reactions—reactions which, in one form or another, have lasted from, say, 1921, to the present day—are more

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complex and interesting still; they concern home politics in the U.S.A., Britain, and other countries almost as much as they concern their relations with the Soviet Union.

They include the continuation of the policy of wholesale misrepresentation and suppression of information about the Soviet Union; the State Department and the British Foreign Office do not easily change their (thick) skins. But they also include something much more serious and deadly—the use of weapons which in the end damage the users more than they damage the target.

What are these weapons? And, indeed, what are the targets at which they are aimed, for there is no longer just one Soviet target? And what is the score?

The targets are: firstly the Soviet Union; secondly the working-class and trade union movement in the U.S.A., Great Britain and elsewhere; and thirdly the progressive movement generally in those countries. The weapons are the wholesale use of the 'Communist bogey' propaganda—the witch-hunt at home, the economic boycott abroad, the agitation for a world crusade to 'destroy Communism' by force. The objects are not merely to destroy, or at least to weaken, the Soviet Union and all other Socialist states, and to prevent any Socialist developments 'at home' (in the U.S.A., Britain, and elsewhere); they are also to weaken the working-class and the whole progressive movement in those countries in their industrial and political fight against the ruling class, with a view to maintaining reactionary rulers in power for a little longer.

And the score? The score is a disastrous negative from the point of view of the anti-Communist campaign. It has scarcely any effect on what is apparently the main target, the Socialist states; it has a disastrous effect on the peace and prosperity—and the trade—of the world, by dividing much of the world into two hostile groups, and it impoverishes the whole world by the armaments race which is an integral part—or at any rate an inevitable result—of the whole policy. (But it does not impoverish the armament manufacturers, who are part of the forces which create and maintain the policy). And, finally, it has a most destructive effect on freedom of thought and expression, particularly but not solely in the U.S.A.

Turn now to consider the second field in which the Revolution has had effects in countries outside the Soviet Union—that of the 'friendly' countries, China and the 'New Democracies' in Europe. Even critics admit that the fact of the Soviet Union's achievements

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has encouraged and inspired each of these countries to advance along its own path (different, be it noted, from the path of the Soviet Republics in 1917, although the goal—the triumph of Socialism—is the same). Without that example, all the other countries, including China, would have had a longer journey to the stage, which they have by now reached.

The third head of study lies in the effects of the revolution, or rather in the effects of the existence today of the great Socialist state, on the world in general, and not specifically on friendly or unfriendly countries. It is clear that the mere existence today of the Soviet Union has a profound effect on the international behaviour of all States.

One need only think for a moment what would be the attitude and conduct of the governments of any of the Western Powers in any major problem or crisis, if the U.S.S.R. were not there, able to express its views with the knowledge that they are backed by its own prestige and power and that of a number of allies. This point need not be elaborated; it is enough to ask how Britain and France would have behaved to Egypt over the Suez Canal if it were not for the Soviet Union.

What of the future, of the fortieth and subsequent years? There is no need to prophesy or speculate; it is enough to record that the Socialist countries are all advancing, the capitalist world receding.

A LABOUR MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION

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EYE-WITNESS AT PEKING

R. PAGE ARNOT

THE impression of Peking is of an extraordinarily busy life evident everywhere in fields and on roads, in new, wide streets and old, narrow lanes, in curling-eaved houses and lofty new buildings, in factories, shops and offices—an impression enhanced on the day of arrival after a flight over the tumbled cliffs and hollows of the Gobi Desert. The clean, smart, attractive appearance of the men, women and particularly of the children, catches the eye. Day after day these impressions were strengthened. Great tasks lie ahead but already vast changes have taken place. The contrast between the old and the new is outstanding, so much so that what has been accomplished gives a sure promise for the future. Visibly, for this fourth part of mankind, the world's great age begins anew.

This thought was fully borne out at the eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, meeting from September 15 to 27. The political report of the Central Committee was discussed and approved and will be an inspiration, not only to this ten million-strong party, but to hundreds of millions of Chinese, who are throwing themselves heart and soul into the work of socialist construction. It will also be of the greatest value to the people of all lands in their struggle for social advance and world peace.

In a short speech opening the Congress, Mao Tse-tung emphasised the need to study, that 'we must be good at studying'; and the need and the importance of humility, and not to 'become arrogant and complacent because of the victory of the revolution'. He said:

> Every nation, big or small, has its own strong and weak points. Even if we had achieved extremely great successes, there is no justification whatever to feel conceited and complacent. Humility helps one to make progress whereas conceit makes one lag behind. This is a truth we must always bear in mind.

Throughout the twelve days of the Congress the speeches, whether by well-known leaders or by very many of the total delegate body of 1,026, all struck the note given at the outset by Chairman Mao. They had to learn, to correct mistakes that had been made, to endeavour to avoid mistakes in the future. In particular these utterances strove to create an abhorrence of conceit, arrogance or any other tendency that would cut them off from the people and hinder the people's advance.*

*The three main speeches were made on the first and second day, leaving full time for debate. Though applause was frequent, there was nothing demonstrative about the Congress, there were no pictures, no painted slogans, no music; only the strains of the International sounded as the proceedings ended with the adoption of the Congress resolution. All festivities were reserved for a whole people's day of rejoicing on October 1.

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The Congress agenda, which had been settled a year ago and had been subject to a twelve months' preliminary preparation throughout the Party, including district congresses, was brief but comprehensive: (1) A political report of the Central Committee, delivered by Liu Shao-chi; (2) a revision of the Party constitution, moved by Teng Hsiao-ping; (3) proposals on the second Five Year Plan for the development of the national economy, put forward by Chou En-lai; and (4) the election of the new Central Committee†.

It is eleven years since the Seventh National Congress. Since then this Party has led the people to the overthrow in 1949 of 'the reactionary rule of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism' and to the establishment of a People's Republic of China. Fundamentally the stage of the bourgeois democratic revolution was completed. The stage of the proletarian socialist revolution was begining. With the common programme of October, 1949, agreed upon by a dozen or so parties in a People's Political Consultative Conference (which, after the setting up of the National People's Congress in 1954, now functions as the main organ of the united front of all democratic parties and of democrats without party affiliation), the period of transition from capitalism to socialism has begun.

This period of transition has two distinctive features, much emphasised at the Congress. Firstly China is a backward agricultural country. Secondly the Chinese working class, having as its allies not only the peasantry (together with handicraftsmen, small shopkeepers and other sections of the petty-bourgeoisie of the towns), but also the national bourgeoisie, must use peaceful means of transformation—a process which takes some time.

For some three years after 1949 there was a period of rehabilitation of the national economy, left in ruins by imperialism and the tools of imperialism. It was in 1952 that the Communist Party put forward its general line for the period of transition: to bring about socialist industrialisation step by step; and with similar gradualness and within a relatively long period to accomplish the socialist transformation of agriculture, handicrafts and capitalist industry and commerce. This line was accepted by the National People's Congress in 1954 and was written into the constitution as the fundamental task for the state. The first Five Year Plan was launched in 1953 with the estimate that industrialisation would take fifteen years, and

†The Central Committee, enlarged by Congress to 97 members plus 73 alternate members, at its meeting on September 28 elected Mao Tse-tung as Chairman; Liu Shao-chi, Chou En-lai, Chu Teh and Chen Yun as Vice-Chairmen; and Teng Hsiao-ping as General Secretary. These make up the standing committee of the Political Bureau of 17 plus 6 alternate members.

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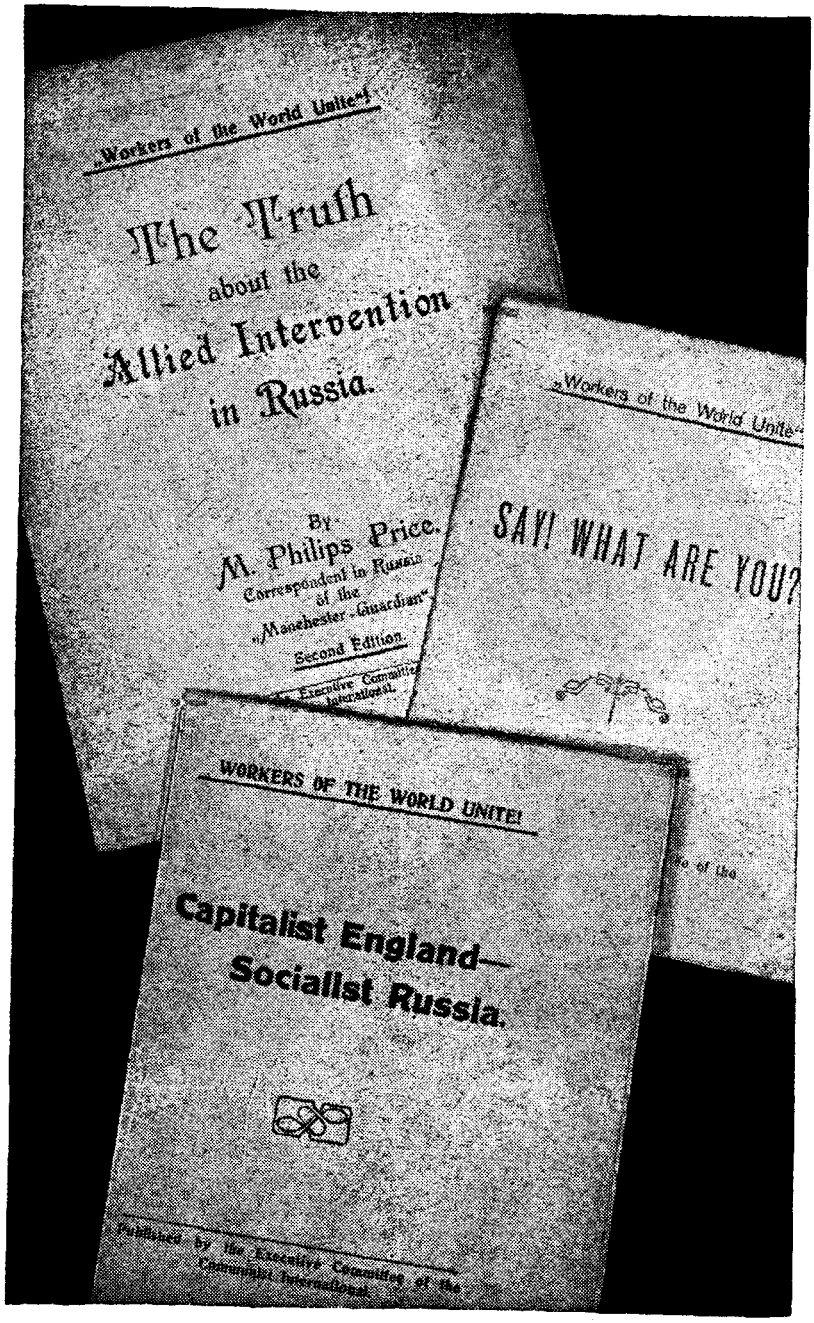
The Thirty-ninth Ar



Three historic pamphlets published in 1919 by the Executive Committee of th

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rsary of the Russian Revolution

'As one who has lived for four years in Russia, has seen the sufferings of her people and their heroic efforts to free themselves, I categorically assert that the anarchy and famine now raging in Russia is the deliberate work of the Imperialist governments of Europe, and in this respect the governments of the Allies and of Germany behave like vultures of the same brood. For what Germany has done in the Ukraine, the Allied governments have done in Siberia and the territories east of the Volga.

'And yet the British working man is told that in Russia there is chaos and anarchy and that the British government out of sympathy for the Russian people is sending expeditions to help them, and to bring a rule of law and order. Where is the law which finances rebellion against a government of the workers and the poorest peasantry, in order to force it to pay an intolerable tribute and reduce it to industrial slavery? Where is the order which brings war to a land that is already exhausted by the three years of slaughter of the European Imperial butchers? The Soviet government of Russia asked peace and the governments of England and France are trying to give it a sword: it asked for help in its work of social reconstruction and it has been given the serpent of anarchy.'

Extract from the pamphlet 'The Truth about the Allied Intervention in Russia' *(pp. 14 and 15), by M. Philips Price, the then Correspondent in Russia of the 'Manchester Guardian'.*

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'The Triple Alliance of Miners, Railwaymen and Transport Workers have threatened a general strike if intervention in Russia is not abandoned. 'Their cry is "Hands off Russia" . . . .'

Extract from the pamphlet 'Say! What Are You?'

●

'To British Soldiers.

'Your Government says that it has invaded Russia to crush the menace of Bolshevism which threatens to destroy ordered society and civilisation. . . .

'Conditions of life in Russia are not yet ideal. We have to undo the work of centuries of Tsarist oppression. That cannot be done in a day. But we have already laid the foundations of a great Industrial Commonwealth. We shall develop the vast wealth of Russia for the whole people. Is this anarchy and chaos? Is the government, which makes this form of society possible, a government against which the English and American workingmen ought to fight? Here is the first attempt in the history of the world to liberate mankind for the full and free exercise of all his natural capacities. Of course it is disquieting to the rich men of England and America, who fear that the workers of their own lands will want to do the same. Therefore *they* want to wage war upon the Russian Republic to restore their capitalist "law and order" . . . .'

Extract from the pamphlet 'Capitalist England—Socialist Russia'.

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ist International.

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experience so far has shown that it will take all that time, if not more. Socialist transformation however has taken much less time than the original estimate. The acceleration of this transformation, startling to the outside world, went on in the latter half of 1955 and the first half of this year. Fundamentally it will be carried through in the first five-year-plan period, and apart from a few places, will be completely fulfilled during the second Five Year Plan.

Mao Tse-tung summed it up in retrospect saying:

> In the eleven years since the Seventh Congress we have, in this great country with its vast territory, huge population and complex conditions, completed the bourgeois democratic revolution and we have also gained a decisive victory in the socialist revolution.

It was in the same opening speech that Mao, dealing with the present situation, said:

> The tasks confronting us today are in general similar to those confronting the Soviet Union in the early period following its foundation. In transforming China from a backward, agricultural country into an advanced, industrialised one, we are confronted with many heavy tasks and our experience is far from being adequate. So, we must be good at studying. We must be good at learning from our forerunner, the Soviet Union, from the People's Democracies, from the fraternal parties in other parts of the world as well as from the peoples the world over.

This question of socialist transformation was dealt with in detail by Liu Shao-chi in his report which as a whole deserves the closest study. He told how the Party in carrying out land reform did not take the 'easy and simple way' of 'bestowing' the land on the peasants. He said:

> For three solid years after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, we applied ourselves to awakening the class consciousness of the peasants, and particularly of the poor peasants, to the fullest possible extent by following the mass line in fully arousing the peasant masses; it accomplished the task of land reform through the struggle of the peasants themselves.

Thus, while in England from the mid-eighteenth century onwards the landlords eliminated the peasantry as a class, in China two hundred years later the peasants, stimulated by the Communist Party, have eliminated the landlords as a class. This change, thus painstakingly and skilfully conducted, created conditions favourable for the subsequent socialist transformation of agriculture, which itself went step by step until the peasants 'smoothly and naturally' could forsake their private ownership of land and accept instead a system of collective ownership—a hundred and ten million peasant

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households organised in about one million agricultural producers' co-operatives, big and small, elementary and advanced.

On the socialist transformation of industry and commerce Liu Shao-chi told of the unique way in which the internal contradiction between the proletariat and the capitalists has been resolved, of the policy of 'at once uniting with them and waging struggles against them, and of attaining unity through struggle', of edging private capitalists towards state capitalism stage by stage. Then as Liu said, and on grounds thus well prepared:

> When, in the period between the autumn and winter of 1955, the high tide of agricultural co-operation blocked the way of developing capitalism in the countryside once and for all, and so effected a basic change in the alignment of class forces in our country, conditions were ripe for converting capitalist industry and commerce by whole trades into joint state-private management. Such joint state-private management of whole trades is the highest form of state capitalism in our country and constitutes a major step of decisive importance, in turning capitalist ownership into socialist public ownership.

Much of the political report, the resolution on it and Congress speeches were concerned with improvements and adjustments of the country's economy following the sweeping socialist transformation (questions of administration and organisation, taxes, prices both for buying and selling and the opening of a free market guided by a unified socialist market). The impression was of a high degree of flexibility and full allowance for bringing into play the initiative of millions either within their co-operatives or as individual members of them. Economists, especially those aware of Britain's need for trade with China, would do well to study the Congress from these aspects.

Present at this Eighth Congress of the Communist Party were many non-communists—members of the Government, leaders of democratic parties and other prominent citizens. Of these, Soong Ching-ling (Madam Sun Yat-sen) was oustanding, alike for a speech she made and for the reception accorded her by the delegates. She is deservedly popular not only as the widow of the man who achieved the final overthrow of the Manchu dynasty in 1911 and much else, but for what she herself has done, and for her courage and steadfastness throughout over twenty years of most difficult circumstances. After references to the Chinese Communist Party which under the banner of patriotism 'has rallied round itself all the democratic parties, brought into being a united front and established a coalition government', Soong Ching-ling said in conclusion:

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> Dear comrades! Class society with its systems of exploitation has existed for more than five thousand years on this planet of ours. But in the thirty-five years since the founding of the Communist Party of China, a very large part of mankind has already broken the fetters of imperialism and taken the socialist road. I firmly believe that in the not too distant future, socialism will become the prevailing social system throughout the whole world.

Present, too, were fraternal delegates from communist parties, workers' parties, parties of labour and people's revolutionary parties of fifty-six countries. 'Inspired by the spirit of noble friendship', said Mao in welcoming them, 'they have undertaken long journeys to come to our country to take part'. Amongst these, not to go beyond Britain, was Harry Pollitt who was cheered again and again as, in an effective short speech, he gave a brief estimate of the Suez crisis as it affected British imperialism and the people of Britain.

The Suez crisis was referred to in speech after speech, showing (as did also the debate on September 20 in the standing committee of the People's Congress) the deep feeling aroused by this imperialist attempt to encroach on the sovereignty of Egypt and to start an armed intervention against her.

Congress over, an extensive tour of Peking and then (bearing inevitable contrasts in mind with the ill-starred 1943 plan for Greater London) a session at the city planning commission yielded not only tangible evidence of the progress in reconstruction already made but also a record of things past and a guarantee of things to come. In this city, where nearly seven centuries ago Kublai Khan set up a short-lived foreign dynasty, the model of medieval town planning under Chinese rule followed in Ming architecture, with its geometrical plan and perfect proportions. Squalor and decay set in with the last Manchu emperors and war lords, the tools of the imperialist powers. Up to seven years ago Dragon Beard Ditch was a by-word even in feudal Asia, a filthy cesspool of rats, fleas, lice, flies, the den of Beelzebub, God of Flies. Now it is no more. Now outside the carefully preserved Forbidden City there are the main streets of the inner and outer cities hundreds of yards wide, while beyond, walls of new suburbs have already grown up with lofty buildings, spacious roads. Now electric supply no longer fails. Now an abundant water supply is on its way from the curbed Yung-ting river. Now. . . .

Now there is once more a new dynasty, a dynasty of the proletariat in alliance with the peasantry, united with all with whom they can and should unite, to end exploitation and build in its perfect proportions a socialist society in China.

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A NEW TREND IN FILMS

JOHN ALEXANDER

IN the past four years questions of realism, human values and national character have been gaining in importance in international film production. This has been increasingly apparent in the character of films shown in these years at successive film festivals. It marks a new stage in the history of international cinema.

At the Ninth International Film Festival held in July at Karlovy Vary serious advances were made in this direction; new countries also took part. In this the Festival showed that the character and objectives of socialist films, with the weight of their countries' diplomacy behind them, together with the growing power of the peace and progressive forces in capitalist countries, were decisively turning the tide throughout the world in the direction of films for peace, of films to quote this year's Festival slogan 'For noble relations between people, for lasting friendship between nations'.

This can be shown in a number of ways, from within and outside the Festival. First. The most important Western films shown at the Festival were *Marty* from America, *A Town like Alice* from Great Britain and *Si Tous les Gars du Monde* from France (shown in this country under the title *Race for Life*); that all had two characteristics in common—not only were they in full keeping with the Festival slogan but all were top commercial successes both in their own countries and wherever they have been shown in the capitalistic world. *Si Tous les Gars du Monde* was not only a mass success on the circuits in Britain but has been booked by Walt Disney Productions for showing throughout the United States: *A Town like Alice,* in spite of its tragic theme, is the biggest Rank Organisation success both here and overseas over a long period (it had a particular success in Malaya): the international prestige, prizes and commercial success of *Marty* are well known.

Second. The character of the most important American films—made on national and international themes—shows that Hollywood has begun to understand that, to make a lasting impression on the world market and achieve a top commercial success, they have to bring in serious realistic themes connected with the fight for peace, national independence and a better life. This explains the success at the British box office in 1954 of *On the Waterfront, The Caine*

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Mutiny, Riot in Cell Block II and *From Here to Eternity* and of *Blackboard Jungle, Not as a Stranger, Marty, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and *Bad Day at Black Rock* in 1955. It also explains their decision to film Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* which will be an important production, and the appeal of recent American films made in Asia, such as *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* and *The Left Hand of God.* Jean Effel the well known French cartoonist, pointed out that capitalist film industries are now making some of their films around progressive themes and that an award now at the Karlovy Vary Festival carries weight in capitalist commercial film circles. This connection between national prestige and the true sources of realism was underlined by the American Ambassador in Prague when he introduced *Marty,* emphasising their inter-action with the lessening of international tension and the kind of criticism which can help forward this process.

Third. Many new entrants were among the 43 countries officially taking part, Brazil, Iceland, Italy, South Africa, Canada, West Germany, Austria, Greece and Spain participated for the first time. Their inclusion made the Festival, in the words of an official, 'the greatest in the history of the cinema'. For the first time the Festival was recognised by the International Federation of Film Producers: whereas there were only 12 journalists covering it from the West in 1954, there were over 70 in 1956. These changes, in the improved international atmosphere, made possible a far greater number of commercial agreements between East and West as well as wider participation by film industries and governments.

It is in the light of these improving conditions that the films from the East European countries shown at the Festival must be judged, especially the new, more personal trend in their film making, which *The Times* correspondent described as the 'apparent liberalisation and humanising of Communist film-making', (*The Times,* 7.7.56). This new trend was most strikingly shown in the Soviet *The Case of Sergei Rumantsev,* the Hungarian *Half a Pint,* the Czechoslovak *The Guilt of Vladimir Olmer,* in the East German *A Berlin Romance* and two gay and vigorous boy and girl comedies from Rumania and Bulgaria—*I Take the Responsibility* and *It Happened in the Street.* The Polish entry, *Warsaw Syrena,* while a highly unsatisfactory film, was in the same trend.

All these films—the main Festival entries from the East European countries—had one central feature in common: they were all about

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young people. And, in the quiet, relaxed and sympathetic way in which they approached young peoples' problems, they showed the confidence of the socialist countries in their way of life and their ability to treat lightly, yet skilfully and with some depth, individual emotional problems and conflicts. These films were concentrating, for the first time, on the actual day to day lives of young working people, not minimising the difficulties and frustrations caused by poor housing conditions and other concrete weaknesses of their society. In this they indicated that in the East, as in the West, the tendency now is to set one's own house in order, to discover how the unorganised and ill-fitting members of society can find their way to a humane and cared-for place in it: an emphasis, in fact, not so much, as in the past, on the organised leadership as on the high-spirited rebels.

These films, in fact, lifted the lid on the new, post-war generation, on the militant feelings of young people who are challenging the rate of social progress in Eastern Europe, demanding a better way of life and, in many cases, showing their impatience with their parents, their leadership, and with their environment, in acts of personal rebellion. In this, on the surface, this cycle of films (particularly *A Berlin Romance, The Case of Sergei Rumantsev* and *Half a Pint*) is not so different from the American cycle—*On the Waterfront, The Wild Ones, Rebel Without a Cause, Blackboard Jungle.* But in every case there is a basic difference: the East European films show, some with more depth and success than others, the contacts of their heroes and heroines with their working people, and make effectively the point that with the solution of their personal difficulties comes a new understanding and identification with the people they work with. The two best of these films, *The Case of Sergei Rumantsev* and *Half a Pint* most successfully achieve this objective: both showed a real struggle in which the working people joined in, the Soviet feature making a particularly sharp and effective attack, in the form of an organised workers' protest, against violations of socialist legality on the part of the State police. There is something fresh, real and capable of development in both the Rumanian and Bulgarian comedies (particularly the latter with its greater zest for real life and people) but I prefer the Soviet comedy, *Loyal Friends,* as the best yet made in the socialist countries for its depth in the portrayal of conflicts of many types in socialist society and their successful solution: it had, to me, a moving quality as well as some penetrating satire, humour and zest for life.

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While these were the main contributions from Eastern Europe—and could be taken to indicate a definite turn in their style of film-making to a broader, more personal approach to life—there was also shown Grigori Roshal's *Children of Freedom* from the U.S.S.R. and Kurt Maetzig's *Ernst Thaelmann—Leader of his Class* from the German Democratic Republic. *Children of Freedom,* covering roughly the same period as the Gorki trilogy, merits comparison with it: it had not the depth of insight into individual characters which distinguishes the Gorki films but it had something different—a telling picture of the mass of the people moving into action on a limited and isolated issue in a small Russian town. Roshal agreed, in conversation at the Festival, that the portrayal of the mass of the people—with no emphasis on leadership—was a major part of his objective in making the film and in this it was successful.

Maetzig's film, *Ernst Thaelmann,* aroused a good deal of controversy since it dealt in political matters in a way made familiar in other previous East European pictures. Members of the West German delegation were understood to say that, since the cold war was ending, the necessity for making this type of film was ending also: this was taken, by many delegates, to apply also to all the films dealing with the Second World War (of which there were many) as being out of keeping with the 'spirit of the Festival'. While I thought the film could have been better made I thought this was a wrong approach both to the Festival and to the international political tendencies, since the main reason why international tension is lessening is the awakening to realities on the part of the world's peoples: the true interpretation of the origins and course of the Second World War is among these realities and Maetzig's film did much to explain them.*

Space forblds a thorough analysis of the other films shown but three features from the West deserve special mention—*Rio 40,* from Brazil, a day in the life of the inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro

*In an interview given to the German Democratic Radio from the Festival I referred to the fact that the Second World War was 'still a leading theme in contemporary cinema in Britain and America'. On the Thaelmann film I said: 'I found the Thaelmann film deeply interesting. I am familiar with the events of the period it dealt with and to me it was a source of profound satisfaction to see the main tendencies of the period—the rise of Nazism and the division in the German working class which made this rise possible—portrayed so clearly and effectively in a film which had all the resources and technique of a major industry behind it. In this sense I think the film is a very useful contribution to peace since it is necessary for peoples everywhere—and especially the peoples of Europe—to understand the real causes of the Second World War and the reasons for the military defeat of German fascism. I found particularly good the portrayal of the Nazis before and after they came to power and the rôle of the Socialist Democratic leadership. At the same time I think the film would have gained in power if it had shown more of the life of the people and less of the actual leaders, if it had avoided a tendency to over-emphasis on a heroic note in some episodes. Nevertheless it is a fine and serious film, whose central theme is a problem of supreme importance to the preservation of peace—the question of socialist-communist unity.'

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with many episodes of real, hard brilliance: *Three in One* from Australia, with two episodes written by Frank Hardy and Henry Lawson, of deep national character, popular in style: and *Midday Darkness* from Japan, a powerful attack on police brutality and mal-administration of justice, based on a Japanese best-selling novel dealing with a well-known police case that was much in the news and in the minds of the people; fifty per cent of the film's financial backing came from the Japanese Electrical Trades Union, which won the second prize—for social progress—after the French film, *Si Tous les Gars du Monde,* winner of the Grand Prize.

The new trend in East European films is to be welcomed and will undoubtedly help to get them shown more widely in the West, in spite of certain weaknesses. In this sense it must be said that some films from capitalist countries notably *Si Tous les Gars du Monde* and *Midday Darkness* contained more power and boldness, in their single-minded pursuit of big constructive ideas. But the tide of criticism and controversy is now running so strongly in Eastern Europe as elsewhere that this problem will no doubt be solved: the result will be a greater depth and strength in their new style of film making because it will be closer to the lines and aspirations of the people.

FROM THE *LABOUR MONTHLY* OF 25 YEARS AGO

OFF THE GOLD STANDARD

The character of the present situation is centred in the collapse of the pound, which opens out an enormous transformation, both internationally and in Britain. The collapse of the pound from its previous gold basis, despite the maximum efforts of the whole forces of British capitalism to save it, marks a deepening of the crisis far beyond the stage when the Labour Government had to give place to the 'National' Government. It is the outer expression of the breakdown of stabilisation. It opens out a whole range of new issues of the most far-reaching character, and transforms basically the old issues. Let there be no mistake. It marks a defeat of British capitalism, a defeat of ten years of its policy; and that defeat reflects, not only the inner rottenness of British capitalism, but also the advancing struggle of the workers. But it marks at the same time, and in consequence, an advance to a new and more desperate stage of fight against the workers, in order to save capitalism, a fight which will take many new forms.

From *The Mass Struggle After the Election,* by R.P.D., November, 1931.

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LETTERS FROM JENNY MARX

[*In our publication of the Marx Family correspondence, we begin this month with the letters from Marx's eldest daughter Jenny to Dr. Kugelmann. Besides giving glimpses of her father, known in the family as 'Mohr', and details about the family life of her mother and her two sisters Laura and Eleanor, the letters tell us how Marx worked on the second volume of* Capital *and what luck he had with his translators into French and other languages. In addition these letters prove to be of great historical interest in throwing new light on the Irish national liberation struggle (the Fenians), and on social and political happenings in Great Britain and France. Above all we witness the development of the First International (International Workingmen's Association) formed in 1864, when Jenny was in her twenty-first year. The first of these lively letters was written five years later. Our text is from photostats of the originals written in English.—Ed., L.M.*]

October 30, 1869.

MY DEAR 'DOCTOR'!!!

Thank you very much for your letter and the copy of the portrait of your dear mother. It is a wonderfully good one—better than the original painting. I was very glad to have it. It gave me much pleasure to hear that you feel better—may time gradually reconcile you to the great loss you have sustained. Think—'after life's fitful fever, she sleeps well—nothing can hurt her further.' Is there no consolation in that thought?

I have written a note to Mrs. Menke.[1] I am much obliged to you for the timely remembrancer, though to my credit be it said, that previous to the arrival of your note, I had thought of writing to 'Mariechen'—but somehow or other—well—the way to hell, they say, is paved with good intentions. Mohr also has written her a few lines. He is much better and has almost managed to get rid of the troublesome cough which so much tormented him at Hanover. He sends you his kind regards, and hopes you will excuse his writing to you, as at the present moment he is very busy reading a book[2] (which has just appeared in the Russian language, and the reading of which gives him no small amount of trouble) on the condition of the Russian peasantry, which it appears is exactly the reverse of what the imaginative Carey[3] represents it to

[1]The wife of T. H. Menke, a statistician from Hanover.
[2]*The Condition of the Working Class in Russia*, by N. Flerovsky, St. Petersburg. 1869. N. Flerovsky, pseudonym of V. V. Bervi (1829-1918), well known Russian Narodnik writer.
[3]Carey, H. C. (1793-1879), American economist.

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be—anything but enviable. 'Happiness doesn't grow in Russia.' This book has just appeared in the nick of time, it is very important Mohr should in his second volume[4] make known the facts contained in it. Meanwhile the French translation of the first volume[4] is steadily progressing. In a month the third chapter will be ready for correction, at least, so writes Paul [Lafargue][5] who visited the translator a few days ago. '*Dans un pauvre maison, dans une chambre plus pauvre encore, où ne se trouve que deux chaises, une table, un lit et quelques planches pour des livres*'[6] Paul writes us, he found Mr. Keller [the translator] busy at his work. He is young, intelligent, enthusiastic. Paul is delighted with him, and particularly admires his '*grand pouvoir travailleur et énergie*' [great capacity for work and energy]—and indeed who could help doing so? For the sake of pursuing his studies (he occupies himself with several sciences, but principally with the social science), this young man lives in a state of comparative misery. His father is a wealthy manufacturer, whose factory he superintended during seven years, but feeling disgusted with his '*métier de garde-chiourme*' [job as prison warder] Mr. Keller gave up his position.

Paul met two more socialists at Mr. Keller's house. '*Le parti socialiste', il nous écrit, 'se constitute à Paris et commence à tenir le haut du pavé, quoiqu'il n'ait pas de journal, il a les réunions publiques et l'agitation personelle.*'[7] No doubt the Socialist party has risen on the ruins of the Simons,[8] Pelletans,[9] Bancels,[10] Gambettas.[11] The French people have discovered that the emptiest vessels make the greatest noise—have watched those big-mouthed ranters turning tail and won't give them credit for their good intentions, their hopes, 'that they who run away, may live to fight another day'.

In London the event of the week has been a Fenian demonstration, got up for the purpose of praying the Government for the release of the Irish prisoners. As Tussy[12] has returned from Ireland a stauncher Irishman than ever, she did not rest until she had persuaded Mohr, Mama and me to go with her to Hyde Park, the place appointed for the meeting. This park, the largest one

[4]Refers to Marx's *Capital*.
[5]Paul Lafargue (1842-1911), Marx's son-in-law, founder of the French Socialist Party and populariser of Marxism in philosophy and history.
[6]'In a poor house, and still poorer room, containing nothing but two chairs, a table, a bed and some shelves for books.'
[7]'The socialist party', he writes, 'is taking shape in Paris and is beginning to take a prominent place; although it has no newspaper it conducts public meetings and personal propaganda.'
[8]Jules Simon (1814-1896), French bourgeois publicist and parliamentarian.
[9]Eugene Pelletan (1813-1884), French radical journalist and member of the Versailles government.
[10]French Republican.
[11]Leon Gambetta (1838-1882), French bourgeois Republican politician.
[12]Eleanor Marx (1856-1898), Marx's youngest daughter.

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in London, was one mass of men, women and children, even the trees up to their highest branches had their inhabitants. The number of persons present were by the papers estimated at somewhere about seventy thousand, but as these papers are English, this figure is no doubt too low. There were processionists carrying red, green and white banners, with all sorts of devices, such as 'Keep your powder dry! Disobedience to tyrants is a duty to God!' And hoisted higher than the flags were a profusion of red Jacobin caps, the bearers of which sang the Marseillaise—sights and sounds that must have greatly interfered with the enjoyment of the port wine at the clubs. On the following day, Monday, all the papers made a furious onslaught on those confounded 'foreigners', and cursed the day they had landed in England to demoralise sober John Bull by means of their blood-red flags, noisy choruses and other enormities.

It is tea-time—and I have promised to roast some chestnuts for Tussy, so thank your good stars or rather the chestnuts that this scrawl doesn't run on for ever. (I am sure you have been thinking I was never going to stop). With kindest remembrances from all at home

Believe me dear 'Doctor'*

Very faithfully yours,

JENNY MARX.

*You seem surprised at my bestowing upon you your sonorous title. Believe me I do not grudge it you. In 'our new society' there will be little need for priests of the body, they will go to the wall along with their brethren physicians of the soul—meanwhile I wish you joy—make the most of your dignities—while they last!

I enclose Werth's photograph.

(Translated from the French)

December 23, 1869.

MY DEAR DOCTOR,

I should very much have liked to send you the *Neveu de Rameau*[1] and the speeches of Camille Desmoulins,[2] but unfortunately the French bookshops are out of stock. I shall do it another time.

I shake your hand warmly,

JENNY MARX.

[1]One of the most famous works of the materialist philosopher Denis Diderot (1713-1784).
[2]Camille Desmoulins (1760-1794), a right Jacobin and publicist of the French Revolution.

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December 27, 1869.

MY DEAR DOCTOR,

I hope you do not fancy that true to the code of certain forefathers of mine, I am indulging in a spirit of revenge. The only reason why I have so long left unanswered your very kind letter is that I haven't been able to call one hour my own. Until two o'clock you know I am every day engaged—then, as our poor Helen[1] has been very unwell, my afternoons were often spent in housework, besides which I have looked through several hundred newspapers, in order to make extracts from them for Mohr of the financial swindling concerns, &c. (By the bye Overend and Gurney[2] have just been acquitted. The bourgeoisie throughout the length and breadth of the land rejoice at the liberation of these 'martyrs', whom they declare to have been more sinned against than sinning. I shouldn't be at all surprised if these thieves in broadcloth were one of these days returned to Parliament to legislate for their countrymen. The partiality of the Judge for the defendants was so glaring, that it struck even the obtuse jury, and on one occasion elicited a protest from them).

You see I have excuses to offer for my silence. But nevertheless, I will admit that though you were right in supposing that I do not bow down before a God of vengeance, I am just as little inclined to worship *ein Kultus lämmerschwänzchen* [lamb-like meekness]. To prove to you that I am not in the habit of returning 'good for evil', I have condemned you as a punishment to eat a most indigestible compound—a truly English plum-pudding, for the performance of which feat, remission for all your sins shall be granted you.

All at home send you their best wishes for the New Year, in which I most heartily join. We were so sorry to hear of your illness, and trust that by this time you have quite recovered from the effects of it. Mohr is in pretty good health at this moment, that is to say, comparatively speaking. A few days ago Engels paid us a visit of a few hours. He was on his way to Barmen where he intends spending the Christmas days with his mother. He looked particularly well, and very happy at having effected his escape from the counting-house, in which he felt like a fish out of water. He works hard at his book on Ireland.[3] Your questions concerning that book, I am unable to answer, being altogether ignorant as to its

[1]Helene Demuth (Lenchen) (1823-1890), housekeeper to the Marx family.
[2]Overend & Gurney, an English banking house which went bankrupt in 1866 for £11,000,000.
[3]Engels was working on a history of Ireland which, however, he never finished.

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contents. I suppose it will be something of a pendant to his *Condition of the Working Class in England*.

It gives us much pleasure to see that you sympathise with us as regards the Irish question. We are all of us downright Fenians. On the day we received the news of Donovan's[4] election we all danced with joy—Tussy went quite wild. You can imagine what consternation the intelligence of the election of a Fenian produced in England. At first the Press, with the exception of *Reynolds* and the *National Reformer*,[5] could only shriek in chorus 'A felon convict has been elected—horror of horrors.' Then having in concert rung the changes on these their magical words, the hireling crew fell foul of each other—the Tory papers abused Gladstone, declaring this election to be the fruit of his policy—the Whig organs ranted on the subject of ingratitude and lamented the fate of a country in which messages of peace and good will were thus answered, in which treason flaunts itself in the daylight and the praises of murder are sung. The British Government at once despatched thousands of soldiers to the sister isle.

It must be admitted that as the Tories say, Gladstone's measure of Church disestablishment has already borne fruit. Religious fanaticism is dying a natural death, the hostility of Catholics and Protestants is at an end, there is a split in the Orange camp and Orangemen, Ribbonmen[6] and Fenians are uniting against their common enemy the British Government. Consequently the influence of the priests is vanishing—the Irish movement is no longer in their hands, in fact the election of O'Donovan Rossa was in direct *opposition* to the clerical party. For instance, these gentlemen being opposed to the release of the political prisoners, convoked meetings for the tinkering of some sort of land bill, which meetings were forcibly broken up by the people, who declared that they would come to no terms with the British Government until the prisoners had been released. As the Government turned a deaf ear to amnesty meetings etc. the people elected O'Donovan Rossa, the Fenian, in defiance of the B. Government and of the Irish professional agitators, lay and clerical, whose insincerity they had at last discovered. Meanwhile the noblest Irish are pining in British dungeons. It is impossible to describe the sufferings of these men. O'Donovan Rossa had been at one time for 35 days kept

[4]Jeremy O'Donovan Rossa (1831-1912), Irish national leader. He was imprisoned for activity in the Fenian movement and in 1870 emigrated to America and took part in Irish affairs there.

[5]The *National Reformer*, a journal of the followers of Bronterre O'Brien, published between 1869 and 1872.

[6]An organisation of the Irish peasants fighting against evictions.

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in a dark cell with his hands manacled behind his back, night and day, and was not loosed even to take food—thin porridge which was left for him on the floor of the cell.

Altogether, my dear Doctor, England is at this moment a country of horrors. In the East End of London famine fever has broken out—in the workhouses the paupers are murdered wholesale. The doctors no longer satisfied with the *corpses* of the paupers, are making their experiments on the *living*, and yet the time is still fresh in my memory when the English press expressed the greatest indignation at the practice of the vivisection of animals in France. Last week a case happened in Wales, which makes one's hair stand on end. A Welsh farmer had spread the report that his daughter, a girl of 12 years, had lived without food for two years. Now though this poor Welshman received money for exhibiting his child, it is possible (in Wales the belief in witches etc. still exists) that he is half a lunatic and believed his tale. But that doctors of the first London hospitals should have done so, seems incredible. Be that as it may they formed a commission and appointed nurses from Guy's Hospital to go to Wales in order to watch this so-called fasting-girl during a fortnight. Daily these same physicians issued bulletins to the public as to the girl's state. For *six* days they kept her without food, and on the seventh the miserable child died. On the night before the child's death, Doctor Davies told the father of the girl that there was no danger and on being examined that gentleman declares, that he did not suggest food because he did not like to 'offend' the father. How very polite and considerate to be sure!—I will try to procure the whole case for you. It certainly does not give one a high opinion of the medical profession in England. I do believe that if a person were to declare that he can walk over red-hot iron bars unhurt or jump out of a window, doctors would be found to investigate the matter. We shall return to the trials by ordeal one of these days.

With best wishes for the New Year

Believe me,

Very sincerely yours,

JENNY MARX.

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LABOUR DISCUSSION FORUM

WELCOME *to all readers who have contributed to this, our first* LABOUR DISCUSSION FORUM. *Correspondents whose letters we print this month include two members of the Labour Party, one of the Communist Party and one who did not mention his political party. Two I know to be active trade unionists, one being the General Secretary of the Association of Supervisory Staffs Executives and Technicians: I have no information about the other two in this respect. I hope, in future, correspondents will mention their organisations (not necessarily for publication, of course). Readers who would like to reply to any of these contributions, or who have new points to raise, are asked to send their letters in for consideration early for the December issue, at the latest by Thursday, November 8, to:—*

THE EDITOR, LABOUR DISCUSSION FORUM,
134 Ballards Lane,
London, N.3.

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Automation: A View

Workers generally accept that, provided automation is introduced and controlled in the interests of the community, nothing else but benefit for the nation as a whole and its people can result.

Yet today, controversy centres around the dangers or benefits that can accrue from automation as and when it arrives, but no-one appears to be remotely concerned about what will happen if other nations introduce automation before we do. The T.U.C. appears to be satisfied to introduce negative safeguards against automation's probable ill effects. The Labour Party, on the other hand, in its 'Speaker's Notes', contends that automation will be a slow, gradual process. Big Business is rubbing its hands at the prospects of even fatter dividends, whilst workers are wringing their hands at the fear of loss of full employment. But just across the Channel, other European nations have their coats off and their sleeves rolled up in an attempt to introduce automation as quickly as possible. Either through the Central Government, employers' agencies or joint ventures between employers and Trade Unions, they are planning the how, when and where automation can be introduced as effectively and rapidly as possible.

In Britain, no-one seems to grasp the urgency of the situation, or to appreciate that automation in operation in Germany, Italy, Belgium and France, and not at home, can result in our being out-produced and out-priced in world markets, and if this arises, it means far more unemployment than ever automation can.

The T.U.C. General Council in its report stated that 'there is a considerable gap between research and

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practical application'. In a later paragraph of their report they go on to say that 'from analysis of the many factors, the General Council are not convinced any more than last year that there is any justification for concluding that the speed and expansion of automation in its three main streams is going to be as alarming as is sometimes forecast, notwithstanding the possibility of largely localised significant developments and changes'.

It does appear from this that whilst the General Council is satisfied that there is a tremendous gap between research and practical application in this country, they are more concerned in setting at rest the fears of the workers that heavy redundancy may result when automation is introduced, rather than looking at the possible implications for the nation as a whole if we fail to introduce automation.

One must not overlook the fact that at the present time the larger industrial combines are going ahead and introducing automation processes wherever practicable. But the smaller producers, whilst having the desire to introduce automation, in most cases have not the capital resources for doing so, and are prevented from obtaining them because of the Government's credit squeeze policy. This, surely, can only lead to an even greater expansion of monopoly practices in this country, and presents a menace not only to the Trade Union Movement, but also that section of the industrial community made up of medium-sized and smaller-sized establishments.

Automation, I contend, if properly planned and controlled, does provide the opportunity for the Labour Movement to give effect to its ideals. It can raise the standard of life here at home, and it will of necessity, because of its great productive potential, involve the development of colonies to provide additional markets. Never have we been given the opportunity before to plan towards the socialist state. The alternative, to me, seems fairly clear. We either plan in order to provide the greatest measure of benefit for the greatest number of people and for their protection against capitalist abuses, or we face the distinct threat of declining into a third-rate industrial power. Automation is therefore not something about which we should speculate as to the desirability of its introduction, but rather how soon and in what form it can be introduced for the benefit of the community.

HARRY G. KNIGHT.
London, E.9.

World Socialism

'If this (*an interchange of ideas between individual socialists and communists*) is the purpose behind G. D. H. Cole's new organisation of non-sectarian socialists, I am overwhelmingly in favour of it', wrote R. H. S. Crossman in last month's issue. Well, this is *one* of the purposes of the International Society for Socialist Studies. A greater measure of socialist-communist unity, though easier to achieve than Labour-Communist unity, still demands much rethinking on all sides. Much that has been taken for granted in both social-democratic and communist theory may need to be rejected or modified—for example, the 'socialist economics' which are indistinguishable from Tory property-owning democracy, and the Marxian view of socialism as the *class* victory of the working class. From this point of view, it may be better to regard practical unity as a possible outcome of tolerant discussion and not as a sole aim.

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The central purpose of International Society for Socialist Studies is to bring about closer contact between those socialists in all countries who regard socialism as a world movement transcending national boundaries and desire to work together to re-think basic socialist ideas in the light of this international approach. We believe we can provide a suitable atmosphere for thoughtful socialist advance. I.S.S.S. seeks to influence the socialist movement but does not itself seek power, and does not speak for its members (or a majority of them) on any given political issue.

S. R. PARKER.
*London, N.W.*11.

He 'Sent' Them

The younger generation is said to be indifferent, to avoid trade union responsibilities, and altogether far from what their fathers were. But recently one youngster gave me an object lesson that I feel I must pass on.

It was during our annual factory outing. Bright and early appeared one of our apprentices glorying in his full Teddy regalia, complete with irridescent mauve socks. He is diminutive, intelligent, reputedly lazy and a wide boy. The other apprentices admire his cheek and smart dealings. Sometimes he brings in pens, Christmas cards, and knick-knacks for sale cheap. In Teddy's department the trade union dues collector finds himself occasionally 'done' over the apprentices' tanners. Teddy glories in Rock 'n' Roll, too; he certainly rocked right around the clock in local cinema disturbances some weeks ago.

On our outward coach journey, the young maestro concentrated on conducting a Rock 'n' Roll choir. At lunch he remonstrated with the head waiter over the quality of the cheese; at the big football game he enraged local and visiting spectators by disparaging comparison of both teams with Millwall. On the homeward journey Teddy grew less sober, thanks to our strategic stops en route. On the last stage it happened. In the coach just in front of me sat the sales chief, sporting R.A.F. moustaches, and the works manager; both men of presence and dignity.

Reeling along the aisle, Teddy halted before them; after an inebriated appraisal, he began a monologue on Suez. Contemptuously rejecting the arguments of the immobilised opposition, he claimed that no-one wanted war over Suez; that this 'Nasser geezer' was unimportant; that behind it all was America 'stirring it up'—with pantomimic gesture. The Air Force type opined to me that he couldn't understand the present generation. I assured him that I had had difficulty too, but I was learning.

Then, drawing his second wind, the orator adjudicated on Nina, thus: 'Now, take this fuss about Nina—America again stirring it up. What do I mean? Don't you read the papers, mate, asking Britain to give her a full deck for nix? Now, what's it all about? Nina nicks five hats, or so they say. She couldn't speak the lingo, she's got plenty of lolly; she's a schoolteacher, married, with a kid, and her old man's a professional bloke. What's she want to nick five hats for, eh? Don't sell me that, mate! Look, my girl works in the Homely British Store, see. So in I go, ask for two bottles of Brylcream. She clocks up a tanner and out I walk with it. Now, say we're nicked, what about it? Just that much, in the local paper, nothing in the evenings, all forgotten. Now, Nina nicks five hats—if she did. Full page in the *News* for two nights,

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Express, Mail, Sketch, all. Why? Because it's a political. Poor old Nina, for twenty-five bob's worth of titfers—all right, all right, 32s. 11d., what's it matter? I'd pay for them my bleeding self.' The opposition silenced, Teddy rolled back to his seat—amid cheers.

Behind rock 'n' roll exhibitionism lie fears and frustration. I can still hear him: 'Who wants war, nowadays? It's finish. We're all finished, if there's another'. Why not ask Teddy what he thinks?—he and his generation are experts on youth. But so as not to incur Teddy's wrath if he sees this, may I sign it,

'ELECTRICIAN.'
London.

Labour Programme

It seems to me that there is a great need in the labour movement for a programme that will enthuse and inspire the ordinary people, and make them feel that a Labour victory is worth campaigning for. There is great apathy amongst Labour and Communist members, and I feel that the reason is that neither Party has a national programme which will encourage them to go out and win support.

What is needed is a detailed plan of what will be done as soon as Labour is returned to power. Here are a few examples.

Housing: Besides increased targets for council house building, and rent control, there is the question of mortgages. Some 40 per cent. of people in this country are buying their own houses—usually because there is no other way of getting one. We must say that the government will reduce interest from 6 per cent. to 2 or 3 per cent., by government loans and by nationalising banks, insurance and building societies.

Nationalisation: Besides proposing to take over heavy industry, we need to reassure those with small businesses that these will not be touched, but will indeed be given a better chance. We in Britain can undoubtedly learn a great deal from the way that China has handled this problem.

Social Services: We need to announce definite practical targets, that within five years we shall have 100,000 more teachers, 500 more hospitals, 1,000 new schools, etc., or whatever may be the figures needed and possible.

In short, we need a programme that will make it obvious to every voter that a Socialist Britain will be worth the effort needed to achieve it.

ANDREW PURKISS.
Bromley Kent.

Putting it briefly . . .

The Forum and its Problems: It is an extremely good idea, but it has its problems that require careful consideration. In a daily paper, readers' replies are published before the original letters are forgotten or events have overtaken the subject and produced the solution. Are you able to afford the space? Is it wise to alter the international aspect or outlook of L.M.? I may be conservative in this regard but I have always valued L.M. for its unique ability to stand back as it were to take a thoroughly comprehensive and objective study of world affairs before it gives judgment.—*G.P., Oxon.*

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The Forum idea seems excellent to me, and so long as Notes of the Month are not condensed to make room for it, I can think of no possible objection or criticism that might be made. It is absolutely correct to demonstrate in a practical way that, far from rejecting democracy, we advocate a more virile and realistic extension of it.—*H.W.S., Wandsworth.*

Your idea of starting a forum is good. I would like to help to keep it going if it is formed. It is more important than some people think, to find out what young people are turning over in their minds. I also think it is good to get Labour M.P.'s to write articles for you. What about Emrys Hughes again? His views are closely watched in Scotland, I assure you.—*R.H.S. Ayr.*

I am all in favour. My only comment is that I hope 'issues of policy' will not exclude some discussion of current cinema, theatre, art and writing and television, for I believe it cannot be too widely understood that the general stagnation in these spheres is the direct result of the concealed censorship which prevents all but the most superficial social criticism in the 'free' world.—*A.F., Kent.*

I call it a marvellous idea. Congratulations on the October 'L.M.' It was a smasher. Things seem to be moving a little, though I'm never very sure of Bevan.—*C.C., Southern Counties.*

The decision to start up a Forum is long overdue. The rank and file of our movement must be seen more often as a reservoir of ideas, and a live forum can throw up quite a few. The question of redundancy is becoming the skeleton in the cupboard. Large numbers of workers are beginning to look over their shoulders.—*A.M., Dagenham.*

Women's wage rates being so low lead to a chain reaction of ill effects which trade unionists often don't realise. In my factory there are few opportunities for overtime—yes, why pretend it isn't eagerly looked for, in present circumstances? So most go on from the factory to some evening part-time job; locally if we are lucky, or with a long crowded journey if we are not. Or it may be we take homework, or go out early morning cleaning, or do week-end work. Lucky to get it, you can hear the older women say, who may be doing a 60-hour week. But that isn't all. For it works out to three jobs, when you reckon it up; there is the home to be kept going at the same time, no cosy digs to go back to! Where are we to find the time to get to the trade union branch, the guild or the political meeting? The union meets at a time and place that suited the craftsmen in the old days. There is little chance to get those three-job women to become active branch-attending trade unionists. But without a solid leaven of women who can and do, how can others be recruited? The trade union district or branch that wakes up and finds the solution to this will recruit in a big way.—*J. G., London.*

That Overtime Question: Undoubtedly this adversely affects militancy in many industries and is widespread in the London area. In some cases jealousies arise over who shall share in the available overtime and between those who wish to work overtime and those who don't. In the latter category are active trade unionists who see the possibility, through rising prices, of losing the advantages of hard-won struggles for

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shorter hours, and also the older workers who cannot stand the pace. The latter, with memories of chronic unemployment, fear that they are thus exposed as sub-standard workers and would be amongst the first to be axed at the onset of a slump. This problem needs carefully handling. An arbitrary call from the top banning excessive overtime I am convinced would be only partially obeyed, and would tend to isolate the leadership from the rank and file. Only continuous argument, pointing out the dangers, and in the knowledge that this is a long-term process which will be proved by events, and not by superiority in debate, will finally decide this issue. Excessive overtime is a temporary phase in post-war industry and exists because buyers can still pay for the increased labour costs. Workers realise this and, in some cases, connive at overtime working when it could be avoided. Managements also realise this and are attempting to solve the problem by rationalisation, by greater productivity to attain competitive prices in a changing market. The B.M.C. struggle was in part a reflection of this and the danger to our living standards is obvious. Most unions are quite clear about it and their demands for higher wage rates are both logical and necessary. Yet it is useless to deny that the present overtime inflated wage packets take the edge off the keenness to fight.—*R.B., Acton.*

R. H. S. Crossman's article. He suggested in the October *L.M.* that individual members of the socialist and communist parties should 'take the risk' of getting together now, and 'create a mental climate' which could lead to official contacts between the parties to clear up past misunderstandings. That is encouraging and stimulating. What is more, in my experience this kind of contact is already happening in many places, far more than is generally realised. Sometimes it follows on local experiences; sometimes it paves the way for getting joint action locally, or at least co-ordinated action on housing, redundancy, Suez, etc. If it were more widely known what is already happening in these ways, I am sure it would lead to similar efforts elsewhere. *L.M.* might give it more publicity.—*T.F., Glasgow.*

That dinner. In his very interesting article on Socialist-Communist relations, Mr. Crossman says the famous dinner given by the L.P. Executive to Bulganin and Khrushchov failed because the unprepared 'attempt at a single bound to jump from attitudes of deep-seated hostility into an informal and friendly discussion let loose suppressed antagonisms on both sides and drove us even further apart'. Of course it is not easy for anyone who was not present to judge. But from published accounts it seems the difficulty arose, not so much from antagonistic viewpoints, as from the unruly way some members behaved. But surely that does not prove that antagonism of viewpoints is an insuperable obstacle to rational discussion!—*R.M., Cardiff.*

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This month's prize of ONE GUINEA *is awarded to 'Electrician' for his letter about youth today, under the title,* HE 'SENT' THEM.

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LABOUR AND ECONOMIC POLICY

The Labour Government and British Industry, 1945-51, by A. A. Rogow assisted by P. Shore. (196 pp. Blackwell. *18s.*)

THIS is a book of some importance since it provides a text from which to begin a thorough discussion of the economic policies to be pursued in the future by the British labour movement. The virtue of the book is its objectivity and realism. The author, of course, has his own point of view: it would be a fair representation of his position to say that he profoundly hopes that a gradualist middle way can be found to social progress which is distinct from capitalist reaction on the one hand and Communism on the other. However, wishful thinking is not allowed to influence objectivity of judgment. 'Does limited reform', he asks, 'by making conditions more tolerable, reduce the need for radical reform, and if so, how is a reform movement to remain dynamic and popular?' A question 'that still must be resolved'. The resolution of this problem can only be found—as I think the author would agree—within the labour movement itself out of its own experience. Mr. Rogow's chief aim is to throw new light on the problem by studying the policies and experiences of the Labour Government. The book contains penetrating examinations of Labour's policy on economic planning, controls and the handling generally of privately owned industries, nationalisation, tax policy, labour relations and propaganda. An example of the significant conclusions which emerge from the scrutiny is:

> Lack of attention to the machinery of planning was itself symptomatic of the growing preference for a free market as opposed to a planned economy. Planning and controls were coming to be viewed more as necessary evils to be dispensed with as quickly as possible than as indispensable machinery for Socialist policy. To be precise, by 1950 the Labour Government was of the opinion that it had accomplished its immediate objective in the creation of a Welfare State . . . The future rôle of the Government, it was believed, was to keep the gates of opportunity open to ordinary citizens, and to maintain, by indirect methods, the kind of economic environment in which opportunity could be realised. The events of 1951, however, made it extremely difficult for the Labour Government to rest on its laurels. Apart from the economic crisis, the resignation of the three Labour Ministers in April, 1951, over rearmament policy marked the first major internal challenge to the Government, whose real significance, as subsequent events have demonstrated, is an attempt to move the Labour Party beyond the philosophy and conceptions of the Welfare State. At the same time, heartened by the swing away from Labour in 1950 and 1951 General Elections, oppositionist tendencies in industry and the Conservative Party were strengthened . . . Hence, since 1951 Labour has been obliged to reexamine its assumptions and achievements and, indeed, its whole experience in and out of power'. (Page 47-8).

Mr. Rogow's final conclusion is that a theoretical critique of British economy as it is today—in the shaping of which the period of the Labour Government from 1945-51 was crucial—is now a matter of urgency.

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We all need to examine concretely the road that Britain should take to reach the socialist goal towards which the British labour movement has, after its own fashion, been striving since the latter end of the 19th century. Any such examination must take into account the political and economic shape of British imperialism today and assess correctly the influence of British finance capital and political forces associated with it that give priority to imperialistic interests over the needs of the people of Britain: it is a weakness of the book that it neglects to do this. Nonetheless, it is a stimulus to thought. J.E.

THE MAGNITUDE OF BANDUNG

The Colour Curtain, a Report on the Bandung Conference, by Richard Wright. (188 pp. Dennis Dobson. *12s. 6d.*)

MR. WRIGHT'S references to Communism in this book, though doubtless innocent of any such preoccupation, should gain him a clearance any time from the minions of the State Department. Nothing that any Communist did at or about Bandung could possibly have been real or sincere, it was always 'shrewd'. In this, as in seeing Bandung as essentially a grand revolt of colour, alas an historically necessary and inevitable consequence of colonialism—alas, as it side-tracks and lures those who share in it away from awareness of the real menace of our time—Mr. Wright's angle of approach comes full circle into identity with that of those white Americans who are clearly his *bête noire.* Yet this defect of outlook, shrivelled by the magnitude of Bandung, is curiously irrelevant to the inspiration shining from the occasion that the book describes. There is no other account available that gives even a glimpse of the grandeur, the scale, the size of what happened at Bandung, the historical watershed importance of the stage of man's development it signalled. This one does, emphatically; its naïveté and superficiality in some ways heighten its vividness. Hence, ten thousand times truer than the cold and cynical paragraphs with which English journalism has sought to bury this epochmaking event, it is invaluable, a political *must* for those who still fail to realise what is happening in more than half the world; a useful reminder, at any rate until something better turns up. I.M.

LABOUR MOVEMENT HISTORY

The British Labour Movement, by A. L. Morton and George Tate. (Lawrence & Wishart. 314 pp. *15s.*)

THE development of British Marxist historical writing has been an encouraging feature of the past quarter of a century, more especially in respect of the many new and scientifically-based expositions that have been provided of various aspects and periods of the history of our own working-class and its rich movement. The great value of this first overall textbook of the movements' history from the earliest days is that, while it concludes at the height of the revolutionary period following World War I (1920), it fully outlines both the political and the industrial history of the movement up to that time. A second volume, tracing our many-sided history in similar fashion for the thirty-odd crowded years up to the present day, will be eagerly awaited; and there will be general regret that the modest and conscientious author of the major part of the present work, the late George Tate, did not live to produce

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its successor, though he had already embarked on the preliminary research.

Stage by stage, as the story of the movement here unfolds, the student is drawn by the facts of life to understand the fundamental lesson that the cause of the working people triumphs when they are united and when the path ahead is clearly illumined by a precise and forward-looking policy. The contrary proposition—that bourgeois ideas inevitably lead to defeat and disruption —likewise finds detailed documentation. Among a number of fresh treatments may be noted the William Morris campaign of 1876-77 in solidarity with the Bulgars and against the Turks, the British movement's reactions to the 1905 Revolution in Russia, the fight of the Marxists against the Hyndman leadership in the Social Democratic Federation in the decade before World War I (it would have been helpful to indicate that the Zelda Kahan who was then the Marxist spokesman is still happily with us, as that respected veteran and Anglo-Soviet expert Mrs. Zelda K. Coates).

A textbook quite naturally invites more searching criticism than an ordinary monograph; and anyone who has specialised in the subject embraced by a textbook will invariably find matter to criticise in the work's first edition. The Morton-Tate book is no exception. The broad soundness of its exposition, and the stimulation and instruction it will afford to many students, does not mean that there can be no improvements in detail. From this point of view the following criticisms are offered. Some high points of the movement could have been given somewhat more detail and colour (e.g., the Lancashire general strike of 1842 and the Dock Strike of 1889). Certain passages would be improved by drawing more directly on the Marxist classics (*e.g.*, the role of the immigrant Irish, where the Hammonds are quoted but Engels is not). There could be greater clarity and detail in the presentation of the Marxist line in the '80's and '90's (the famous Engels' guidance through the Avelings). Hyndman's 'basic weakness' is said to be his fatalistic, apocalyptic appreciation of Marxism. Surely it was his bourgeois lack of understanding of the working class, more especially his ignorance and distrust of trade unionism? (Tom Mann had some fundamental comments to make on this.) Correct criticism of Keir Hardie duly appears, but only after somewhat starry-eyed references to his supposed qualities (I prefer Engels' suspicion of the 'more than crafty Scot'; after all, the centrism of Hardie and the I.L.P. proved one of the biggest curses of the British Labour Movement.) One final point to note is the imperfect technical editing the work has received. Names are misspelt (William Allan of the engineers given throughout as William Allen, the historian Maccoby rendered with only one 'c', Feargus O'Connor's first name minus the 'a', Bruce Glasier given a superfluous 'i' and so on). Bronterre O'Brien looks odd disguised as J. B. O'Brien. Some dates are wrong (1843 instead of 1844 for the Rochdale Pioneers).

But these are only relatively minor criticisms and do not detract from the great value of the work as a whole. Meanwhile it is to be hoped that a new edition will soon be possible and such defects as these can be remedied.

ALLEN HUTT.

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(*Continued from page ii of cover*)

Gould and William Paul, we come to a most important series *Towards a New Policy* for trade unionism, at an extremely interesting time, which reads like a character study of British trade unions. It began soon after the 1923, 'worst ever', Plymouth T.U.C. ('It wasn't a Congress, it was a laundry', exclaimed one delegate) just as the first Labour Government was returned. It went on for eight months, when Ramsay MacDonald was on the eve of his first sell-out, to put the Tories back in power. Taking part in it were three members of the L.P. executive, the Chairman and two other members of the General Council of the T.U.C., and the secretaries of the Engineers, Miners, Building Trades Workers and Loco men.

In summing up R. Palme Dutt thanked all who took part, but had to point out: 'It is impossible to read this series of articles and to consider all that they imply without a sense of tragedy'. For from all those articles, when considered as a whole, little emerged which, in fact, could lead to that 'New Policy', so vitally needed by the movement. Did that mean the series was a failure? Far from it. The T.U.C. at Hull which followed was 'one of the most successful and forward-moving congresses'. There was a new fighting spirit. New leaders were at last appearing, others were beginning to move in a progressive direction. That was due, of course, to the struggles in the workshops and ferment of discussion everywhere. That had certainly been stimulated by the Policy Series in L.M. For amongst shop stewards then as now, L.M. was closely read. Indeed, it could not have survived without being based on close contact with them.

Awaiting Release

Just a brief greeting to our readers still awaiting release from the Forces, both old and new—including the lad in Germany who having 'found much interesting reading in the last six editions' writes: 'you can count me as a regular reader from now on. Keep up the good work!'

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